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**Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott**

**IN OPPOSITION TO LD 490**

**An Act To Eliminate Certain Motor Vehicle Inspections in the State**

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police in Opposition to LD 490

LD 490 would essentially have the same affects on traffic safety as LD 431. Therefore, the previous testimony on LD 234, LD 354 and 431 should all be considered a prelude to this testimony.

The current inspection standards are set by the Maine State Police in collaboration with our stake holders within the industry, as well as our federal partners such as AAMVA (American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators) and NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). This created fair and equitable minimum safety standards for inspections. With that being said, the Maine Motor Vehicle Inspection Manual (rules) has been tweaked and boiled down over the years to ensure that only items with a safety nexus are required to be inspected. I have heard others testify that they get a free 21-point inspection with their oil changes and question why we need a state regulated program. If the inspection program was eliminated, who would set the standards? Would they be arbitrary or capricious standards set by each repair facility? Who would ensure that the vehicle gets repaired? Would they need be licensed? Who would license them? Would the technicians have to prove their proficiency in automotive mechanics? Would they have to be a person of honesty, integrity and reliability? The current inspection program has evolved over the years and has addressed these concerns and more.

AAMVA wrote the following in their best practices guide; "AAMVA promotes periodic motor vehicle inspections (PMVI) to ensure that vehicles are maintained

for safe operation.” They further state; “PMVI programs can prevent vehicle failure on the highways and crashes that may result in injuries or death. These programs are increasingly important as people keep vehicles for longer period of time.”

NHTSA states in their Uniform Guidelines for Highway Safety Programs that; “Each state should have a program for periodic inspection of all registered vehicles to reduce the number of vehicles with existing or potential conditions that may contribute to crashes or increase the severity of crashes that do occur, and should require the owner to correct such conditions.” NHTSA goes on by providing minimum standards that each state should include in their program. In a 2008 report NHTSA estimates that vehicle component failure was the “critical reason” for 2% of all crashes (three most common failures were related to brakes, tires and steering components) and that evidence of a vehicle system breakdown was present in 6.8% of all crashes. I would suggest that these numbers, while significant, are grossly underreported. Police officers are not mechanics, nor do they routinely perform post-crash inspections, therefore most officers find crash causation as driving behaviors rather than mechanical defects.

In 2017 the Texas Department of Public Safety, through a competitive selection process, contracted with the University of Texas at Austin’s Center for Transportation Research to conduct a study on the efficiency and necessity of their inspection program. After this study, their recommendation was to retain the inspection program and to conduct a further study to determine whether potential additional inspection items such as tire age and recall information should be included to enhance their program. Their recommendations were based on the economic and safety impact evaluations. They developed salient findings summarized below;

- Crashes involving vehicles with defects are twice as likely to result in a fatality than crashes with vehicles that do not have defects.
- Vehicles from other states that have an inspection program are involved in fewer crashes in Texas than vehicle from other states without a program. This indicates that a safety inspection program helps reduce the number of defective vehicles on the road.
- The percentage of crashes involving defective vehicles increases with higher speed limits, as does the severity of the crash.
- The average crash costs related to vehicles with defects are more than 2 billion dollars per year. Most defects are vehicle elements that would have failed an inspection.
- The frequency of fatalities, incapacitating injuries and non-incapacitating injuries is higher for crashes involving vehicles with defects. The number of fatalities per number of defective vehicles in crashes is about 3 times higher than vehicles without defects.

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- Vehicles with defects involved in crashes increase with the age of the vehicle, highlighting the importance of the inspection program to help ensure the key safety components are in good condition.
- The most prevalent type of defect related to fatal crashes is slick or defective tires. 23.5% of survey respondents identified slick or defective tires as a vehicle element they were forced to remedy during their inspection history-meaning that the fatality crash rate would be higher without such inspections.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote “Ought Not To Pass” on LD 490.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.

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